

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT A 03743 090222Z
ACTION OPIC-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9539

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIN, HA
SUBJ: PROPOSED HAITIAN SUGAR PROJECT

REF: STATE 200521

1. THERE APPEARS TO BE LITTLE HAITIAN KNOWLEDGE OF OR SUPPORT FOR THE SUGAR PROJECT PROPOSED FOR THE REMOTE ST. MICHEL DE L'ATALYE REGION. A WELL FINANCED CAREFULLY MANAGED PROJECT IN THE AREA MIGHT SUCCEED AS THE SOIL IS REPORTED TO BE GOOD AND IRRIGATION FROM WELLS MAY BE AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, THE AREA LACKS BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE SUCH AS POWER, ROADS, SCHOOLS, ETC., AND IT WOULD NOT BE PRUDENT MANAGEMENT TO POSTULATE MUCH IN TERMS OF GOH SUPPORT. IN ADDITION, FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL OF LAND IS RESENTED BY HAITIANS GENERALLY AND IS STRICTLY LIMITED BY THE LAND LAW OF 1975. MICHEL PEREZ OF THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF CHICAGO SAID THAT HE KNOWS LITTLE ABOUT THE PROJECT AND HAS MADE NO COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT IT.

2. THE GOH IS INTERESTED IN ALMOST ANY NEW PROJECT PROPOSAL WHICH MIGHT INCREASE PRODUCTION AND PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR HAITI'S RURAL POOR BUT RARELY MAKES COMMITMENTS UNTIL IT HAS HAD TIME TO CAREFULLY EXAMINE A COMPLETE PROPOSAL AND THE PROMOTERS HAVE ESTABLISHED THEIR FINANCIAL BONAFIDES. IT PROBABLY WILL BE ESPECIALLY SLOW TO SUPPORT A SUGAR PROJECT AS IT WAS EMBARRASSED BY THE FAILURE IN 1976 OF A HIGHLY TOUTED SUGAR SCHEME ORGANIZED IN THE PLAINE DU NORD BY CANADIAN PROMOTERS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES CLAIMS THAT THE GOH, QUOTE, SUPPORTS, UNQUOTE, THE PROJECT SHOULD BE VIEWED SKEPTICALLY.

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3. A SUGAR EXPORTER UNTIL ABOUT 1975, HAITI IS NOW A NET

IMPORTER, ABOUT 210,000 ACRES ARE PLANTED WITH SUGAR CANE OF WHICH ONLY ABOUT 50,000 ACRES PROVIDE CANE FOR THE THREE CENTRIFUGAL MILLS. THE REST OF THE CANE IS CRUSHED AT ARTISAN MILLS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION IS INCREASING FASTER THAN THE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH AND PROBABLY AMOUNTS TO ABOUT 70,000 TONS. APPROXIMATELY 27,000 TONS WERE IMPORTSA IN 1977, MOSTLY FROM BRAZIL AND GUATEMALA. GOOD RAINS IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1977 AND 1978 WILL INCREASE PRODUCTION IN 1978 AND 1979. IMPORTS WILL DECREASE.

4. UNTIL MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ABOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT, THE EMBASSY WOULD HESITATE TOSPECULATE ABOUT ITS COMMERCIAL VIABILITY OR A POSSIBLE RESUMPTION OF EXPORTS TO THE UNITED STATES.
JONES

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Message Attributes

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